

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Geoffrey Garin
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RE: Why Democrats Should Lean Into the Title X Gag Rule Fight

Recent national surveys have shown that large majorities of voters oppose the extreme abortion bans that several Republican state legislatures have enacted, and polls have documented a significant backlash against these laws in the form of increasing numbers of voters expressing support for legal abortion.

Republican policies as well as the *attitudes* of Republican politicians regarding women's access to reproductive healthcare have exacerbated the GOP's deep problems with women voters. In a survey we recently conducted in eight 2020 Senate battleground states, voters say by a margin of 54% to 30% that they trust the Democratic Party more than the Republican Party on women's rights and equality for women. Among women voters themselves, the Democratic Party is more trusted on women's rights and equality by 59% to 28%. Women under the age of 40 trust Democrats more, by 72% to 16%.

Given these results, there is a clear benefit to shining as much of a spotlight as possible on Republican policies that impose more restrictions and burdens on women.

The inclination of women to trust Democrats more than Republicans certainly is evident with regard to the issue of healthcare, and recent polls indicate it also applies specifically to the issue of abortion. A recent national Marist poll conducted for NPR and the PBS Newshour asked voters: "Do you think the Democratic Party or the Republican Party would do a better job of dealing with the issue of abortion?" Voters overall say they trust the Democratic Party more, by 46% to 37%. Among women voters, only 29% say they trust the Republican Party more, compared to 50% for the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party has the advantage among independent women by 47% to 26%.

Democrats have the opportunity to bring these advantages to bear and put Republicans in the Senate and the House on the defensive by strongly opposing the Trump Administration's Title X gag rule and standing firm on the issue during the appropriations process. Polls show that two central aspects of the rule cause a large majority of voters to reject it:

- It imposes new gag rule on doctors and other medical providers that will prevent them from helping their patients get the care that is right for them, while allowing federal family funding to go to providers that refuse to fully inform women of their medical options.
- It will, by design, make it harder for low-income women to find quality, affordable options for screenings and other basic healthcare, including Planned Parenthood.

A recent poll conducted by GBA Strategies finds that 58% oppose the Title X rule change that would "prohibit providers receiving Title X federal funding, which is intended to provide low-

income women with reproductive healthcare, from also offering women referrals for abortion.” Only 36% support this rule change, and voters with strong feelings on the matter oppose the ban on referrals (i.e., the gag rule) by better than two to one (43% strongly oppose, 18% strongly favor). Democratic voters oppose the gag rule by a 42-point margin, but the issue divides Republicans (47% favor, 45% oppose), even though the question specifically references President Trump. Independent women oppose the rule by 59% to 34%.

It also is worth noting that the GBA Strategy poll finds that fully 73% of voters say it would be a bad outcome if the Trump Title X gag rule means that doctors won’t be able to give their patients all the medical information available, including 62% who say it would be a very bad outcome.

This finding is consistent with what non-partisan polls have found in related contexts. National polling by the Kaiser Family Foundation, for example, shows that 63% of Americans say there should be continued Medicaid funding for Planned Parenthood’s non-abortion services, notwithstanding the fact that Planned Parenthood provides abortions and refers women for abortions.

Kaiser Family Foundation polling also shows that 62% of Americans oppose providing federal funding for providers that do not counsel pregnant women about all of their choices, including prenatal care, adoption, and abortion—a key element of the Trump Administration’s Title X gag rule.

The other key vulnerability for the Trump Title X gag rule, and for GOP elected officials who support it, is the negative impact the rule will have on women’s access to affordable, quality basic healthcare services, including their ability to get preventive care at Planned Parenthood clinics.

- In our polling last year, 75% nationally voiced disapproval of efforts by the Trump Administration to block access to care at Planned Parenthood, because it would leave many women with nowhere else to go for care, including 54% who strongly disapprove.
- With regard to Title X, 79% say it would be a bad outcome if the rule means many women will find healthcare more expensive and harder to get, including 64% who say it would be a very bad outcome.
- Similarly, 76% say it would be a bad outcome if the Trump Administration’s Title X gag rule means that many low-income women will lose access to basic healthcare like birth control, testing for STDs, and cancer screenings.

The Republican Party is increasingly identifying itself with the idea that politicians have the right to control when, how, and why woman get their healthcare—an idea that is offensive to many women and out of step with the views of most voters. The events of the past two years also have led voters to see the Republicans as being too willing to take affordable healthcare away from people. **A fight over the Trump Administration’s Title X gag rule and its consequences for women’s healthcare offers an opportunity to bring these vulnerabilities to the fore, and will put many Republican senators and House members to the test on where they stand on the extreme positions of their party and President Trump.**